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HSC BRIEFING

15 January 1980

**POSSIBLE ILLNESS OF KHRUSHCHEV**

- I. The Soviet Foreign Ministry announced on 14 January that party boss Khrushchev is absent from Moscow for a short rest.
  - A. Khrushchev has not appeared in public since 2 January, although there have been several functions he would normally have attended. However, he may have given a private interview to a Danish newspaperman sometime after 2 January.
- II. It seems unlikely that Khrushchev is on vacation since he returned from six weeks leave in Yalta on 4 October and normally takes only one vacation each year.
  - A. Illness seems to be a much better possibility; the reference to "rest" in the official announcement suggests that he may be ailing.
    1. Khrushchev is known to have kidney trouble although this ailment is not known to have interfered with his work in the past. It is also possible that his rigorous schedule since October has caused over exertion.
- III. It is not uncommon for the Soviet Foreign Ministry to make announcements regarding the absence of Soviet leaders although it is not always done. In this case the announcement was in reply to a question by a foreign newspaperman in Moscow.

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